REMARKS

The present Amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed November 24, 2004, in the above-identified application.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-2 and 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,478,682 to Funahashi. Referring to FIG. 3 thereof, Funahashi discloses a multi-color rubber stamp including rubber letter blocks 10 having engraved letter surfaces 10'. Partition plates 8 are inserted between each adjacent rubber letter block 10 to prevent the mixing of different colored inks. In response to the Examiner's rejection, Applicant respectfully asserts that Funahashi does not teach or suggest a hand stamp including first and second marking structures that are assembled together, "wherein at least one of said opposing edges [of the first and second marking structures] has a non-porous surface for preventing migration of said first ink of said first marking structure with said second ink of said second marking structure." Clearly, Funahashi provides no teaching that at least one of the opposing edges of the marking structures has a non-porous surface for preventing migration of ink. For the above reasons, claim 1 is unanticipated by Funahashi and is otherwise allowable. Claims 2 and 4 are unanticipated, *inter alia*, by virtue of their dependence from claim 1, which is unanticipated for the reasons set forth above.

The Examiner rejected claims 7 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,988,987 to Ikura *et al.* Referring to FIGS. 1-3 thereof, Ikura *et al.* discloses a combination stamp 1 having a plurality of stamp elements 2, each of which includes a stamp frame 3 in the form of a tube having a rectangular cross-section. The stamp frame has a top wall 3a and four sidewalls 3b, 3c, 3d, and 3e. The

sidewall 3b includes a dovetail-like vertical interlocking projection 5, and sidewall 3c has a dovetail-like vertical interlocking groove 6. The vertical projection 5 is fitted into the vertical groove 6 to join adjacent stamp elements 2 together and to prevent horizontal displacement of the adjacent stamp elements 2.

In response to the Examiner's rejection, Applicant respectfully notes that Ikura *et al.*'s two stamp frames 3, shown in FIG. 3, thereof can be assembled in more than one configuration. In FIG. 3, Ikura *et al.* shows a first stamp frame (on the left) having a dovetail-like projection that is assembled with a dovetail-like groove of a second stamp frame (on the right). However, the first stamp frame can be decoupled from the left side of the second stamp frame and reassembled with the right side of the second stamp frame, whereby the dovetail-like projection on the right side of the second stamp frame is assembled with a dovetail-like groove on the left side of the first stamp frame. Thus, Ikura *et al.*'s stamp frames can be assembled in more than one configuration. For the above reasons, Applicant respectfully asserts that claim 7 is unanticipated by Ikura *et al.* because the reference neither teaches nor suggests that the "first and second marking structures can be assembled together in only one configuration." Clearly, Ikura's stamp frames can be assembled together in more than "only one configuration." For all of these reasons, claim 7 is unanticipated by Ikura *et al.* and is otherwise allowable. Claim 9 is unanticipated, *inter alia*, by virtue of its dependence from claim 7, which is unanticipated for the reasons set forth above.

The Examiner rejected claims 3 and 6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Funahashi in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,119,596 to Fletcher *et al.* In response, Applicant respectfully asserts that Fletcher *et al.* does not overcome the

deficiencies noted above in Funahashi. Thus, claims 3 and 6 are patentable, *inter alia*, by virtue of their dependence from claim 1, which is patentable for the reasons set forth above.

The Examiner rejected claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Funahashi in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,000,335 to Imamaki *et al.* The Examiner has cited the Imamaki *et al.* reference as teaching the formation of a non-porous surface by applying a light source heat that melts the microporous stamping member. In response, Applicant respectfully asserts that Imamaki *et al.* does not overcome the deficiencies noted above in Funahashi, and that claim 5 is patentable, *inter alia*, by virtue of its dependence from claim 1, which is patentable over Funahashi for the reasons set forth above.

Claims 8 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ikura *et al.* in view of Funahashi. In response, Applicant respectfully asserts that Funahashi does not overcome deficiencies noted above in Ikura *et al.*

The Examiner rejected claims 10 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ikura *et al.* in view of Fletcher *et al.* In response, Applicant respectfully asserts that Fletcher *et al.* does not overcome the deficiencies noted above in Ikura *et al.*

The Examiner rejected claim 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ikura *et al.* in view of Imamaki *et al.* In response, Applicant respectfully asserts that Imamaki *et al.* does not overcome the deficiencies noted above in Ikura *et al.*

In the present Amendment, Applicant has added new claims 19-21 that depend either directly or indirectly from claim 1, and new claims 22-24 that depend either directly or indirectly from claim 7. The addition of new claims 19-24 adds

no new matter and is fully supported by the originally filed specification.

New claim 19 is unanticipated by Funahashi because the cited reference neither disclosures nor suggests a hand stamp "wherein said opposing edges of said first and second marking structures are in contact with one another." As noted above, Funahashi provides partition plates 8 (FIG. 3) between the adjacent rubber letter blocks 10. The adjacent rubber letter blocks are not "in contact with one another" as required by claim 19. Thus, claim 19 is patentable over the references cited by the Examiner and is otherwise allowable. Claim 19 is also unanticipated, *inter alia*, by virtue of its dependence from claim 1, which is unanticipated for the reasons set forth above.

Claim 20 is unanticipated by Funahashi because the cited reference neither disclosures nor suggests a hand stamp "wherein said non-porous surface comprises melted microporous foam that prevents ink from passing therethrough." Referring to FIG. 3 thereof, Funahashi provides a partition plate 8 for preventing ink migration. The partition plate neither teaches nor suggests that the "non-porous surface comprises melted microporous foam that prevents ink from passing therethrough." For these reasons, claim 20 is patentable over the references cited by the Examiner and is otherwise allowable.

New claim 21 is unanticipated by Funahashi because the cited reference neither discloses nor suggests a hand stamp "wherein said non-porous surface is integral with one of said first and second marking structures." Funahashi's partition plate 8 is not integral with the rubber letter blocks 10. Thus, Funahashi does not teach or suggest that the "non-porous surface is integral with one of said first and second marking structures." For these reasons, claim 21 is unanticipated by Funahashi and is otherwise allowable.

New claim 22 is unanticipated by Ikura et al. because the cited reference neither discloses nor suggests a hand stamp "wherein the interlocked patterned peripheral edges of said marking structure comprise foam." Ikura's interlocked structure is made of a synthetic resin stamp frame, which does not comprise foam as required by claim 22. Thus, claim 22 is unanticipated by Ikura and is otherwise allowable.

New claim 23 is unanticipated by Ikura because the cited reference neither discloses nor suggests a hand stamp "wherein one of the interlocked patterned peripheral edges has a non-porous surface and the other of the interlocked patterned peripheral edges has a porous surface." Clearly, both of Ikura's interlocked edges have non-porous surfaces. For these reasons, claim 23 is unanticipated by Ikura and is otherwise allowable.

New claim 24 is unanticipated by Ikura because the cited reference neither discloses or suggests a hand stamp "wherein said first and second marking structures comprise foam surfaces, and wherein at least one foam surface of said first marking structure is in direct contact with at least one foam surface of said second marking structure." Referring to FIG. 2 thereof, Ikura's sponge stamp plate 4 is separated from an adjacent sponge stamp plate by one or more stamp frame sidewalls 3b, 3c, 3d and 3e. As a result, the adjacent foam surfaces are not "in direct contact" with one another as required by claim 24. For these reasons, claim 24 is unanticipated by Ikura and is otherwise allowable.

As it is believed that all of the rejections set forth in the Office Action have been fully met, favorable reconsideration and allowance are earnestly solicited.

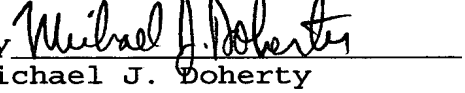
If, however, for any reason the Examiner does not believe that such action can be taken at this time, it is respectfully requested that she telephone Applicant's attorney

at (908) 654-5000 in order to overcome any additional objections which she might have.

If there are any additional charges in connection with this requested Amendment, the Examiner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 12-1095 therefor.

Dated: March 29, 2005

Respectfully submitted,

By 

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